

***Pulaski County  
Community Development Commission***

Tuesday, 16 January 2024  
Winamac Municipal Utilities Complex  
Winamac, Indiana

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, 7 March 2023  
Winamac Municipal Utilities Complex  
Winamac, Indiana

Members present: Brad Bonnell (County Council), Doug Denton (Monterey), Sheila Jimenez (Winamac); Bill Champion, Blake Kasten, Brian Ledley, Kelsie Zellers. Executive Director Nathan P. Origer, Assistant Taylor Bailey.

Members absent: Maurice Loehmer (County Commissioners) [personal], Lynn Johns (Francesville), Art Conley (Medaryville); Christy Coon, Brandon DeLorenzo [personal], Breann Wilson.

Guests present: None.

Call to Order

Director Origer called the meeting to order at 6:00 *p.m.* and introduced Mr. Bonnell, whom the Council had appointed to replace Kathi Thompson.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

**By consensus.**

Reorganization of the Commission

*Election of Officers:* Director Origer noted that the five officer positions needed to be filled; Ms. Thompson, whom Councilor Bonnell had replaced, had served on the executive board. Ms. Jimenez had expressed interest in continuing as president; no others had made nominations or volunteered. Ms. Jimenez nominated Mr. Champion to replace Ms. Thompson on the board, and the remaining 2022-2023 officers present agreed to continue in their roles. With no other nominations having been made, the slate was approved. The director would confirm with Secretary DeLorenzo.

**Motion: Mr. Champion; second: Mr. Denton; no discussion; approval: all.**

*Strategic Visioning Committee:* With committee membership overlapping significantly with the executive board's, Director Origer suggested that maintaining the S.V.C. might be unnecessary, particularly now that the Commission had entered year two of strategic-plan implementation. The members agreed to disband the committee and to assign its responsibilities to the Executive Board.

**Motion: Mr. Denton; second: Mr. Champion; no discussion; approval: all.**

*Revolving Loan Fund Committee:* Director Origer had taken what the Committee had put together to the County Attorney for review; Mr. Tankersley had approved of most of the changes and provided feedback on matters needing further attention. The director would need to reconvene the committee to review these issues; the president and Mr. Kasten agreed to remain on the committee.

Consent Agenda

With no requests for extraction having been made, the Consent Agenda was adopted.

Financial Report

The Commission had ended 2022 returning about 25 percent of its operational budget, most of this having been unspent courthouse-project funds. The L.I.T. – Economic Development Fund had ended 2022 with a slightly better balance than it had 2021.

The end-February report showed an increase to both the personnel and operating budgets: Ms. Bailey had become a full-time employee, the Council had awarded five-percent pay increases, and funding had been included for the housing project and potential-project grant matches. The non-C.D.C. share of the L.I.T. – Economic Development budget had increased substantially, too, as the Council had moved I.T. funding into that budget. The County Council had reallocated the income tax rate in 2022, so the amount of revenue in this fund would be drastically higher than 2022.

Director Origer noted a forecasted year-end balance of about \$1.47-million, compared to \$1.87-million at the end of 2022. Once the County would issue the bond for the courthouse project, the difference would more than be made up by reimbursement to the fund.

The Donation Fund had \$3,898.12 in it, with \$1,000 allocated to support Leadership Pulaski County. Mr. Ledley inquired about the status of Leadership Pulaski County; the director explained that it was expected to resume in the fall, but he was unsure of planning specifics. The Revolving Loan Fund balance had climbed to \$126,042.32.

### Strategic Plan Implementation Report

*Restructuring and reorganization:* The Board of Commissioners and Council had authorized the director to move forward with establishing the Pulaski County Redevelopment Commission, Economic Development Commission, and Tourism Advisory Council. A formal tourism commission had not been approved due to the Council's not being ready to implement an innkeeper's tax. The director had nearly completed two of the ordinances and one resolution required. He would seek the County Attorney's reviewed before presenting them for adoption.

The Winamac Town Council had agreed to disband the Winamac Economic Development Commission, allowing one economic-development commission to serve the whole county.

Director Origer and Ms. Bailey had begun scheduling tourism-partner meetings; this is part of the pathway toward setting up the Tourism Advisory Council.

The director added that he would like for all of the members of these bodies to be appointed by the third quarter of 2023 so that they would be operational going into the new year.

*Community Foundation partnership projects:* The Main Street Winamac board had finished its bylaws, articles of incorporation, and board-member marketing materials and been trying to fill a few board seats. Once the seats had been filled, there would be a public call-out meeting. President Jimenez added that anyone interested in serving on the board should contact Director Origer.

The director and the Housing Taskforce had continued working with the housing consultants and evaluating potential building sites. Councilor Bonnell had pointed out that the County Farm property has some drainage issues that would have to be addressed. There is another potential site on the east side of Winamac, but the site would have to be purchased. An industrial prospect had expressed potential interest in some of the industrial-park land.

The Board of Commissioners had approved the Commission's direct funding of the broadband consultant, who had previously been paid by the Community Foundation. The Board has also approved funding a broadband plan for the County with American Recovery Plan funds.

*Implementation, other — quarterly event:* Director Origer explained his preference to have the event in Francesville due to the Summit's being in Monterey, and the last two having been held in Medaryville and Winamac; Mr. Ledley suggested that the event be held at the Francesville Market; Director Origer and a Pulaski Memorial Hospital representative could talk about the pharmacy that would be opening there later this year. The director would move forward with this.

*Implementation, other — R.E.D.M./regional Ag. Strategy:* Director Origer advised that the strategy had been finished at the end of 2022, and committee members had slowly begun working on implementation; he would be scheduling meetings with Northwest Indiana Food Council and the Indiana Cooperative Development Center. The Northwest Indiana Forum would be re-establishing a position in part to help with implementation. A copy of the plan would be sent out and posted on the website after one last proofreading. Director Origer and a colleague had presented the plan to the White County Economic Development Board and would be presenting it in Starke County as well.

### Old Business

*Revolving Loan Fund matters — general updates:* Mr. Voranoff had not been cooperating with the County Attorney, who consequently had begun seriously considering filing for foreclosure on I.B.C Thermoplastics. The adjacent property owner may still be interested in buying. Another borrower had become several months behind, but had been working to catch up.

*Revolving Loan Fund matters — program review:* There director would be scheduling a committee meeting to review Mr. Tankersley's comments.

*Solar-energy development:* Baker Tilly had begun its Invenergy impact studies for the Bottlebrush Solar project. Lightsource bp would not be pursuing any local incentives and had anticipated paying more than \$50-million in taxes over 35 years. Director Origer had requested their supporting data behind this claim. Moss Creek had yet to apply for a building permit after the ordinance changes, while Mammoth had received its permit.

#### New Business

*Volunteer assistance:* Claude LeMere had recently approached the director, offering volunteer assistance to be a “man on the streets”, providing face time for the Commission in public. A resident of Porter County who recently purchased and been spending a significant amount of time at a home outside of Winamac. Mr. LeMere has substantial professional experience in economic development. After review, the Executive Board decided not to send him out in the community to represent the Commission; however, it may be worth asking him to serve as an informal consultant periodically.

*Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors membership:* Director Origer expressed his frustrations due to what he had perceived to be a lack of mission, vision, and focus; questionable financial decisions; and a lack of understanding of a chamber’s purpose as a membership organization. The director asked for guidance from the Commission. President Jimenez advised Director Origer to resign; Mr. Denton agreed, adding that Director Origer could still lend a helping hand to the Chamber if needed. The director would be submitting his resignation.

#### **By consensus.**

*2023 Economic Development Summit:* The Summit would be held on 18 April in Monterey. Mr. Denton suggested the fire station as the best location. President Jimenez noted that the old school is far too cold during this month, and Mr. Denton added that the Fire Department would welcome hosting, as they are trying to raise funds for equipment. Director Origer inquired about available catering in the area; Mr. Denton suggested Vicki Zehner, who had done it in previous years. Director Origer asked what topic members would like the guest speaker discuss; broadband development and post-pandemic recovery with a focus on small businesses or a bank with how lending has changed were suggested; Mr. Ledley proposed the speaker be someone from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. Director Origer would move proceed with guidance in mind.

*Membership action:* Director Origer requested authorization to reach out to two members to ask if they would be present at meetings or would resign: Art Conley had not attended a meeting since November 2021, and Christy Coon had implied interest in resigning, but had not done so. The director received this authorization.

**Motion: Mr. Champion; second: Mr. Ledley; no discussion; approval: all.**

#### Other Pertinent Business

*MatchBOX Regional Acceleration Program:* The Wabash Heartland Innovation Network (WHIN) had made a grant to the MatchBOX Co-Working Studio in Lafayette to bring their Regional Accelerator Program to the 10 WHIN Counties, including Pulaski. This is a free six-week entrepreneur-training course. Two residents had signed up; a minimum of four would be required. Director Origer encouraged members to send anyone who may be interested to him. MatchBOX would not set a date until enough participants had registered.

#### Public Comment

*None.*

#### Adjournment

**Motion: Mr. Denton; second: Mr. Champion; no discussion; approval: all**  
7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Taylor Bailey, Assistant/Recording Secretary  
Sheila Jimenez, President/Secretary *pro tempore*